THE

Present Conjuncture:

IN A

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN A

CHURCH-MAN

AND A

DISSENTER.

——————Immedicabile vulnus
Ense recidendum est.—— Ovid. Metam. lib. 1.

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THE

The *Present Conjuncture*; In a DIALOGUE between a *Churchman* and a *Dissenter*.

Church-man. OH! Neighbour, I am heartily glad to see you; I have long desired to have an hour's Discourse with you, that I might know your Sentiments of the *Present Conjuncture*.

Dissenter. Sir, I thank you for my kind Reception, and shall endeavour to make my Visit as agreeable as I can.

Ch. Well, Neighbour, what do you think of the Times now?

Diss. Why, to tell you the truth, I cannot but be pleas'd with the Humour of a Gentleman, who died lately, and injoined his Relations to bury him with his Face downward: saying, That in a short time the World would be turned upside down, and then he should be the only Person who lay decently in his Grave.

Ch. Why, I must confess there has been a considerable Revolution, but I hope we Churchmen have still kept up our Reputation.

Diss. Ay to be sure; but I hear Hue and Cry has lately been sent after your Doctrines of *Passive Obedience*, *Non-Resistance*, *Jure Divino-Monarchy*, *&c.* And they say some Roguish Fellow has pack'd them up, and run with them back as far as Forty one.

Ch. Indeed our *Passive Obedience* and your *Addresses* have been the two great Supporters of the King's Hopes; but he has now found, to his Sorrow, that we no more designed to obey Arbitrary Commands, than you Address'd for the Establishment of Popery: But here's the Mischief of it, you Dissenters will still be condemning us before you have heard us either Explain our Doctrines, or Distinguish the Times.

Diss. Come, come, don't tell me of Explaining or Distinguishing, Honesty is Uniform, and needs no such Shifts: Why did you not Explain and Distinguish while the Court smil'd, and you had the Whip in your hands? As for our Addressing, 'tis plain to all the World we only designed to return the King Thanks for that Common *Liberty* and Ease we had from your Severities.

Ch. 'Pray Neighbour, be not so warm; you know the Complement was attended with the Promise of Lives and Fortunes; but, not to be too nice upon your Good-Breeding in the Case; lend me but a little Patience and I'll demonstrate to you that the Proceedings both of our Clergy and Laity in this late Revolution have been consonant to their former Doctrines, Reason it self, and the Constitutions of this Kingdom.

Diss. Well, I commend you at least for fair Promises, I wish you perform them better than a Great Man before you has performed his.

Ch. That I shall leave to the Judgment of the Impartial: But first of all I must crave leave to tell you, That I shall not here undertake to defend the extravagant Notions of every Upstart, who, through Prospect of Advantage, might flatter the Court with his own *Chimæra*'s: But, by the aforesaid Doctrines, I mean those generally preached up by the Learned and Unbyass'd Clergy, and approved of by all the thinking Men of our Church.

Diſſ. I muſt confeſs I cannot expect you ſhould defend the Exceſſes of every ovice; but I can by no means reconcile theſe late Proceedings to thoſe Doctrines hich were Aſſerted by the moſt Learned of your Clergy.

Ch. Which therefore of our Doctrines would you inſinuate to me?

Diſſ. Why, in ſhort, to ſee a Company of People up in Arms, and joining with n Invader, who had ſo Zealouſly Aſſerted *Paſſive Obedience*, *Non-Reſiſtance*, *&c.* nd had taken ſeveral Oaths, diſabling them upon any Pretence whatſoever, to take p Arms without the King's Order, *&c.* This I ſay is a Riddle to me.

Ch. Your Objection I confeſs is weighty, though obvious and the common talk; ut being prepared by many Premeditations on this Subject, if you pleaſe to lend e a little Attention, I ſhall endeavour to ſatisfie your Difficulties.

Diſſ. 'Tis what my Charity much deſires.

Ch. Firſt, therefore, to deal ingeniouſly with you, I confeſs, at the beginning f this Revolution I was under a very great Surprize: I, who have been in Arms or His Majeſty, a warm ſtickler for the Church of *England*, puffed up with all he Bravado's and Exceſſes of an *Oxford* Loyalty, muſt needs be Alarmed to hear ur Nobility and Gentry beating up for the Prince of *Orange*, even in the Bowels f our Country. But when I came more ſeriouſly to reflect upon the Foundations f our Government, as well as thoſe antecedent Obligations which God Almighty has eſerved as his own inviolable Prerogative, I began to Regulate my Zeal by calmer meaſures. And making a more impartial and ſtrict Inquiry into the Opinions of earned Men concerning the Regal Power, I found this moſt generally agreed upon; viz. That the Obedience and Diſobedience of Subjects muſt be meaſured by the pecu-iar Conſtitutions of every Kingdom, without reſpect either to the Jewiſh Polity, where things were determined by God Almighty's ſpecial Command, or the Beha-viour of the Primitive Chriſtians, who had few or no Legal Rights to Aſſert.

Diſſ. Ay, but you Churchmen flattered the Court ſo long, till our Conſtitutions were all ſwallowed up in the Abyſs of Prerogative.

Ch. I muſt confeſs while Kings are a Protection to Liberty, Property and Reli-gion, the World is naturally prone to flatter them; neither would it be good Breed-ing to make too nice Inquiries into the Limits of a Prince while he does not exceed them; but when Diſtreſs comes impetuouſly upon a Nation, when Life and All that is ſacred to us lies at Stake, then the Inquiry is not only juſt but neceſſary.

Diſſ. What Conditions therefore will you Churchmen at length confine your Prince too?

Ch. Why, I ſhall preſent you with a ſhort but impartial view of the Conſtitutions of this Kingdom, as I find them moſt faithfully and ingenuouſly repreſented by the Royal Martyr in his Anſwer to the Nineteen Propoſitions, in theſe Words, *viz.* 'There being Three kinds of Government among Men, *Abſolute Monarchy*, *Ariſto-'cracy* and *Democracy*, and all theſe having their particular Conveniences and Incon-'veniences, the Experience and Wiſdom of our Anceſtors hath ſo moulded this out 'of a *mixture* of theſe, as to give to this Kingdom the Conveniences of all Three, 'without the Inconveniences of any one, as long as the Balance hangs even between 'the Three Eſtates, and they run jointly on in their proper Chanel, *&c.* In this 'Kingdom the Laws are jointly made by a King, Houſe of Peers, and Houſe of Com-'mons, choſen by the People, all having free Votes, and particular Privileges, *&c.* 'And in this Kind of *Regulated Monarchy*, that the Prince may not make uſe of his 'Power to the Hurt of thoſe for whoſe Good he hath it, and make uſe of the Name

'of

'of Publick Neceſſity for the gain of his private Favorites and Followers, to the 'detriment of his People; the Houſe of Commons (an excellent Conſerver of Liberty) 'is ſolely entruſted with the Levying of Moneys, and the Impeaching of thoſe, who 'for their own Ends, though countenanced by any ſurreptitiouſly gotten Command 'of the King, have violated that Law which he is bound to protect, *&c.* Since 'therefore the *Power Legally* placed in both Houſes, is more than ſufficient to *Pre-* '*vent* and *Reſtrain* the Power of *Tyranny*, *&c.* Our Anſwer is, *Nolumus leges An-* '*gliæ mutari.* So far this Royal Author. And indeed what could a generous Prince acknowledge, or a Privilege-aſſerting Subject deſire more? Therefore, upon the whole, it appears by the Confeſſion of the beſt of Men, as well as the wiſeſt of Princes, that we are under a Government ſo well appointed for Society and the Exigencies of humance Kind, that nothing but Folly can think of Eſtabliſhing a better, and nothing but a Jeſuit diſturb it: The Scriptures themſelves ſeem to have meant it when they tell us that *Cæſar*'s Prerogative muſt never come in Competition with that of God Almighty, and that Governors ſhall be a Terror to evil Works. Here King and People have each their Territories, and all the Proviſion imaginable made againſt thoſe Diſtractions which either Intereſt or Paſſion ſhould attempt. From all which what can be more naturally inferred, but that we in this Kingdom are by no means obliged to reſign up our ſelves to Violence and Oppreſſion, but that Paſſive Obedience has its Limits, and the Oath of Allegiance its Reſtrictions: A regulated and conditionated Monarch can expect no Obedience from me but what is Conditional too; and what an Abſurdity does it ſeem, that by a Legal Oath I ſhould Swear an abſolute Obedience to that Authority which is not Abſolute. Beſides, thoſe Subſidies which were granted by the Clergy in ſeveral of Queen *Eliz.* her Parliaments for the Relief of the *French*, *Dutch* and *Stotch* Proteſtants, againſt their Oppreſſors, plainly ſhew that it was all along the Opinion of the Church to Reſiſt in caſe Rights and Religion were Invaded: Neither am I perſwaded that the learned and unbyaſs'd Clergy of our preſent Church ever meant any other Obedience than an active Conformity to the Intent of the Law, or a Paſſive Submiſſion to the Penalties of it. Therefore though upon the Foundations of our Govrrnment, an impatient Spirit might with a great ſhew of Reaſon eſtabliſh a very extenſive Latitude, in aſſerting the Subjects Right; yet in Favour of Monarchy, which I Reverence, and with Reſpect to the *Preſent Conjuncture*, I ſhall only now trouble you with theſe four Propoſitions, ſuppoſing a mixt Government; 1. That Suſpicions and Jealouſies of a Prince's ſiniſter Deſigns are no ſufficient Grounds for Subjects violently to aſſert their Rights, but in this Caſe the Event of things muſt be left to Providence. 2. That though one Man or a greater number of Men receive manifeſt Injuries by the Abuſes of Government, yet while they are but an inconſiderable part of the Community, they are in Duty bound rather to ſubmit to Oppreſſion, than interrupt the common Peace: But, 3. When Dangers become demonſtrable, when Religion it ſelf, and the very Foundations of Government are ſo undermined by the Inſinuations of an inconſiderable party, who have obtained the Ear of their Prince, that its unavoidable Ruine muſt neceſſarily follow. In this Caſe I cannot ſee any Reaſon why Right may not be aſſerted. But, 4. When a Foreign Prince with a conſiderable Army Invades a Nation, upon pretence of putting a ſtop to ſuch violent Proceedings, beſides, perhaps, ſome juſt Cauſes of a War; I ſay in this Caſe, That the whole Nation may and ought to riſe and put themſelves in ſuch a Poſture, that they may be able to return him Thanks according to the Merits of his Favours, without being jealous of his

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reatneſs. And indeed our preſent Caſe is ſo Circumſtantiated, that I queſtion whe-
er it may be parallelled in Hiſtory; and let any Man tell me where the Subjects of
Limited Monarchy, tired out with the Abuſes of Government, did by fighting for
eir King encourage Oppreſſion by the Blood of Thouſands, when they might ef-
ct a Treaty in all probability with little or no Blood-ſhed, by joining with a
rince of their own Intereſt, who, perhaps, can ſhew more juſt Cauſes of a War
an one?

Diſſ. I muſt confeſs what you have ſaid ſeems to carry a great deal of Reaſon and
loderation with it, which I muſt allow.

Ch. Let but a moderate Papiſt lend me one grain of his own Principles, and I am
onfident he cannot but be of my Mind; for may we but modeſtly meaſure the
ing's future Proceedings (had we truſted him with Victory) by thoſe we had al-
eady ſeen, how diſmal would the Proſpect be? Should we but recollect how bare-
acedly he has been ſtricking at the Northern Hereſie ever ſince the *Oxford* Parlia-
ent; what Mercy could we expect? How far ſome of the Proteſtant Nobility
ere engaged in an Aſſociation to aſſert their Rights, I ſhall not here pretend to de-
ermine, but this we may modeſtly preſume, That all their Crimes were ſeen through
Popiſh Magnifying-Glaſs, and no Artifice neglected to Ruine them. An inge-
ious Gentleman was deſervedly applauded for his Rhetorical Colours in the Nar-
ative of that Conſpiracy, and I was well pleaſed with a Gentleman's Fancy, who
magined another Intereſt would now engage him to atone for his unhappy Conti-
nuance in the High-Commiſſion Court, by Writing what he obſerved of the Popiſh
Deſigns, during his ſtay there. Another eminent Inſtance of thoſe Violences which
were Encouraged above, was the Preſenting Two and fifty Perſons in the County of
Northampton as diſaffected to the Government, and branding them with all the
Scandals imaginable; many of which I perſonally know to be as Faithful to the
Crown, and in all Reſpects as honeſt and worthy Gentlemen as any in the King-
dom. But to come nearer the *Preſent Conjuncture*, how were our Laws, Pro-
perties, and all, proſtituted by a few Diſpenſing Gentlemen, ſome of them perfectly
incapable of any Place of Truſt, and all of ſuſpected Integrity. How ſurprizing was
it to ſee perſons of the moſt contemptible Character placed among our Biſhops; and
all the ſacred Authority lodged in a Court which was erected againſt an expreſs Act
of Parliament? What a Riddle was it that our learned Prelates (hitherto the great
Supporters of the Crown) ſhould be Impriſoned for acting according to their Con-
ſciences, in refuſing to Read that which pretended to eſtabliſh the greateſt *Liberty of
Conſcience*? Could any one that ſaw Six hundred Scholars up in Arms, and chearfully
demonſtrating their Loyalty in the Weſtern Rebellion, ever think to ſee the Fellows
of *Magdalen* College ingratefully turned out like Dogs, and perhaps one of the fineſt
Foundations in *Europe* become a Kennel for Miſcreants, who were more unworthy to
be Members of an Univerſity, upon the account of their Inſufficiency, than they were
incapable of it by Law? It ſeem'd almoſt a Jeſt to me to ſee in *Chriſt-Church* perſons of
that eminent Character and Learning, ſuperintended by a Wretch not fit for common
Converſe. In which Society there is a Perſon in whom the Gentleman and the Scho-
lar do very eminently meet, and who for his happy Conduct and great Care to main-
tain the Repute of that College during theſe Violences, has certainly now all the
Title to the Deanry that either merit, or the common Rules of Gratitude can af-
ford him. But to proceed, I ſay to ſee how all Freedom of Elections to Parliament was
in a manner taken away; how the Poll at *Northampton* was like to be Regulated by
Powder

Powder and Bullet, and the whole Government managed by Father *Petre's*, *Penn*, *Lob*, and a few more such mercenary Wretches; and all this to introduce a Religion contrary to Scripture, and destructive of all Society, for which we expected great things would have been said while the Asserters of it had Command of the Press, and the Countenance of a Prince, yet nothing was produced but Fallacy and Nonsense: These, I say, (not to mention the subverting Succession, a League with *France*, and those horrid Murthers laid to the Court) are Provocations too great even for Primitive Obedience: But seeing these Violences have in all probability found their period, and the Betrayers of God and their Country are now coming to Answer for themselves, I shall leave further Reflections to a free and unbyass'd Parliament.

Diff. Ay, but what was it that encouraged these Violences? Was it not your unseasonable Zeal for an unlimited Obedience? your *Oxford* Decree, and such like Monuments of the Heats of that Age?

Ch. Why, to tell you sincerely my Opinion in the Case; I am perswaded there were Two Parties in the Nation undermining the Government; the one by more secret and mysterious Methods endeavoured to introduce Popery; the other by more evident and bare-faced Proceedings, attempted the Extirpation of Monarchy: Therefore the Generality of the Churchmen being more sensible of the Designs of the latter, endeavoured to stand like *Moses* in the Gap with those you term unseasonable Doctrines, which I also take to be the Occasion of the *Oxford* Decree; for though in my own private Opinion I never approv'd of it, but wished it might have perish'd in the same *Rogue* with the Books it condemned; yet I am so well satisfied of the Learning and Integrity of those worthy Gentlemen who were chiefly concerned in it, that I do really believe it was only promoted for the Preservation of the Government.

Diff. Ay, you Churchmen have such a way of Respecting one another, that you had like to have fooled us, and your selves out of all; neither could I ever find you were sensible of the approaching Calamities till Oppression touch'd your own Copyholds.

Ch. What you Object to us in this Case seems to redound to our greatest Honour; for by our Principles we had always such a Reverence for Monarchy, that we were willing to connive at the failings of a Prince as long as we could; but having our Rights established by Law, we knew when we came to be oppress'd: The very Foundations of our Government were assaulted, and so we were forced to make Enquiry into our Constitutions.

Diff. So then at length you will acknowledge the Prince of *Orange* not only to be a great but a just Deliverer.

Ch. Since I have been better acquainted with the horrid Designs of our Adversaries, and found the Contest to be only between Papist and Protestant, I am not only highly sensible of the Prince's Generosity, but have inferred the Justice of his Cause from the marvellous Providences which have wrought his success: It is certainly part of his Character, that as his first Pretences were modest, so Fortune has not tempted him to exceed them; and we have still all the Reason in the World to imagine that he only generously designed to relieve us from Oppression without any sinister Intent of making himself Great: The Noble Cause he has undertaken is the Protestant Interest, and I doubt not but the Lord of Hosts will Fight his Battels. Indeed the Success of this his first Enterprize has been so wonderful and surprizing, that it will make an Annal suspected, and seem a Fable to Posterity; For who will believe that a King, who, had he acted agreeably to the true Interest of himself and People, might

night have been almoſt the Ballance of Chriſtendom, who was prepared with a ſtanding Army, and always Remarkable for his Conduct in War, ſhould be invaded by a near Neighbour, Son, and Nephew; and now in a Months time ſo generally deſerted by his Nobility, Gentry, and Military Forces, as to chooſe, before the Sword was drawn, to fly for Refuge to a Prince whoſe Title he and his Anceſtors had long diſputed? This, I ſay (as the Learned Dr. *Burnet* Argues at large) was the Lords doing, and ought to be marvellous in our Eyes.

Diſſ. It was indeed an unparallell'd Act of Providence; but now our Deliverance is ſo far Compleated, what are you Churchmen willing to do towards an Accommodation, and to the Healing of thoſe Differences which in a great meaſure have contributed to the Growth of Popery.

Ch. Though it be far above my Character to dictate what is fitteſt to be done at ſo great and difficult a *Conjuncture*, yet my humble Wiſhes, are, that the Guardians and Supporters of our Church may reſolve upon ſuch Condeſcentions as may ſatisfie reaſonable Men, and prevent any longer Diſſenſions amongſt us: Yet this I would adviſe you and your Party, *i. e.* to ſtay till you are Invited, and not to thruſt your ſelves into our Church: We are now in the hopeful *Criſis* of our Fever; and therefore you ought to take care leaſt by tampering too much, you diſturb Nature in thoſe methods ſhe has took to digeſt her Humours, and ſo ruine all. I am not ignorant that at the beginning of the Reformation when a Church was to be made out of a Church, ſeveral Ceremonies were retained in Compliance to that Age which a violent Alteration would have too much ſurprized; but now the Humours of Men being changed may juſtly be laid aſide: On the other hand, I am perſwaded with the Author of *Fox*'s and *Firebrand*'s, that *Rome* has all along been induſtrious to foment our Diviſions, by ſending us Emiſſaries, who could artificially diſſemble a tender Conſcience, and make credulous People believe that all the Decencies of our Worſhip were nothing but Foppery, Superſtition, and the Remainders of Popery: Therefore I ſay my Wiſhes are, that a Free and Unbyaſs'd Parliament will tread the middle path, bearing an equal Reſpect to the Decencies of our Church, and the tender Conſciences of reaſonable men.

Diſſ. Well, Neighbour, I am heartily glad to ſee theſe happy effects of our Calamities, and, as I think, there can be no Government ſo perfectly appointed as to ſatisfie all, yet I approve ſo well of your Temper and Wiſhes, that I hope we may all Unite upon ſuch or the like terms.

Ch. Therefore to end our Diſpute, I ſhall only now detain you with my hearty Prayers that the Reſult of this enſuing Convention on *Jan.* 22. may be happily to ſettle the Crown; and that in the ſucceeding Parliament, the management of theſe Difficulties may fall into the hands of ſuch Wiſe and Unbyaſs'd Perſons, that Peace and Truth may be eſtabliſhed upon everlaſting Foundations, and no ſiniſter Intereſt interrupt ſo great a Deſign.

Diſſ. Sir, You have infinitely encouraged me to wait upon you oftner, we being I think now either both *Churchmen*, or both *Diſſenters*.

Ch. Sir, The Deſign of this Conference was to tell you freely my Sentiments, and I intend ere long to make it more publick, being willing to provoke ſome more learned and judicious Pen to perfect what I have here weekly attempted.

Farewell.

FINIS.